



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

February 9, 2005

Mr. Thomas Shute
Assistant City Attorney
City of San Antonio
P. O. Box 839966
San Antonio, Texas 78283-3966

OR2005-01175

Dear Mr. Shute:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Public Information Act (the "Act"), chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 218451

The City of San Antonio (the "city") received a request for information and any warrants regarding a complaint at a specific address. You have not submitted information regarding the requested warrants. Therefore, to the extent such information existed when the city received the present request, we presume you have released it. If such information exists and you have not released it, you must do so at this time. *See* Gov't Code §§ 552.301, .302. You claim that the highlighted portions of the submitted records are excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Pursuant to section 552.301(b) of the Government Code, a governmental body must ask for the attorney general's decision and state the exceptions that apply within ten business days after receiving the request. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(a), (b). You state and the documents reflect that the city received the request for information on November 12, 2004. However, you did not request a decision from this office until November 30, 2004. Consequently, you failed to request a decision within the ten business day period mandated by section 552.301(a) of the Government Code. Because the request for a decision was not timely submitted, the requested information is presumed to be public information. Gov't Code § 552.302.

Pursuant to section 552.302 of the Government Code, a governmental body's failure to comply with the procedural requirements of section 552.301 results in the legal presumption

that the requested information is public and must be released unless the governmental body demonstrates a compelling reason to withhold the information from disclosure. *See* Gov't Code § 552.302; *Hancock v. State Bd. of Ins.*, 797 S.W.2d 379, 381-82 (Tex. App.—Austin 1990, no writ) (governmental body must make compelling demonstration to overcome presumption of openness pursuant to statutory predecessor to section 552.302); Open Records Decision No. 319 (1982). Generally speaking, a compelling reason exists when third party interests are at stake or when information is confidential under other law. Open Records Decision No. 150 (1977). Section 552.101, which encompasses "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision," generally can provide a compelling reason to overcome the presumption of openness. *See* Open Records Decision No. 630 (1994) (presumption of openness overcome by a showing that the information is made confidential by another source of law or affects third party interests). The informer's privilege, however, is held by the governmental body and serves to protect its interests in preserving the flow of information to the governmental body. *See Roviario v. United States*, 353 U.S. 53, 59 (1957). Accordingly, a governmental body is free to waive the informer's privilege and release information for which it otherwise could claim the exception. Open Records Decision No. 549 at 6 (1990). Thus, the informer's privilege does not constitute a compelling reason to overcome the presumption of openness. We therefore determine that the complainant's identifying information must be released.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, upon receiving this ruling, the governmental body will either release the public records promptly pursuant to section 552.221(a) of the Government Code or file a lawsuit challenging this ruling pursuant to section 552.324 of the Government Code. If the governmental body fails to do one of these things, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll

free, at (877) 673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Tex. Dep't of Pub. Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.—Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the Texas Building and Procurement Commission at (512) 475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. We note that a third party may challenge this ruling by filing suit seeking to withhold information from a requestor. Gov't Code § 552.325. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,



Jaclyn N. Thompson
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JNT/krl

Ref: ID# 218451

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Michael Moczygemba
132 Vassar
San Antonio, Texas 78212
(w/o enclosures)